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We have, in the Good Friday Agreement, an unprecedented opportunity to put the past behind us and begin again. The path of the Agreement, based on partnership, equality and mutual respect, has been overwhelmingly endorsed by the people, North and South. One of the core features of the Agreement is its respect for diversity and difference. Nobody is being asked to sacrifice on fundamental aspirations and ideals. The Agreement requires only that their pursuit be by exclusively democratic and peaceful means.

All parties agree to the full implementation of all aspects of the Agreement, including the objective of achieving total disarmament and the complete withdrawal of all weapons from politics in Ireland. They accept the issue of arms must be finally and satisfactorily settled and will do what they can to achieve the decommissioning of all paramilitary arms within the timeframe set down in the Agreement in the context of the implementation of the overall settlement.

The International Commission on Decommissioning will now begin a procedure of intensive discussions with all parties and report back on progress before 30 June.

In the light of that report, all parties anticipate, without prejudice to their clear positions on this issue, achieving full devolution of power by 30 June.

In the light of the above commitments the parties in the Assembly intend to proceed to appoint Ministers Designate under the d'Hondt procedure next week; such Ministers will take up office on devolution on or before 30 June.

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The two Governments will carry on doing all they can to give effect to the will of the people to see the Good Friday Agreement implemented in all its aspects, including its institutions, operating in shadow form, and for their part have made it clear that 30 June is the final date by which devolution must take place.

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